Retro VGC – Issue #1

Cover Illustration: An Atari 2600 console surrounded by game cartridges, capturing the early era of home video game consoles.

Welcome to **Retro VGC**! In this inaugural issue, we dive deep into the classic era of gaming.

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Editor’s Note

Retroport Game Boy DMG (1989) – the handheld console that introduced millions to gaming on the go.

Welcome to the first issue of Retro VGC! We’re thrilled to launch this weekly journey into gaming’s golden past. Over the last few years, classic video games and consoles have surged in popularity again – even among younger players. A recent survey found **66% of Britons have bought some form of retro tech in the past two years**, and notably **24% of Gen Z now own a retro game console** [1] . Why the revival? Many young gamers see nostalgia as a welcome break from the fast-paced internet age, even calling retro play “like their escape” from stress [2] [1] .

As your editor, I grew up with 8-bit chiptunes and “wasted weekends” on NES and Atari. Now I’m excited to share that passion with old and new fans alike. In this issue, expect deep dives, interviews with collectors and builders, and pages of 1980s-style artwork and ads. We hope Retro VGC brings back fond memories and sparks new ones. Ready Player One (or Two, or Three)? Let’s press Start!

Retro News Roundup

- **Gen Z Fueling Retro Renaissance:** Retro gaming isn’t just an old-timer’s hobby – younger players are embracing it too. According to a 2025 Fast Company report, a large UK survey found that 66% of Britons bought “retro tech” recently, and *one in four Gen Zers now own a retro games console* [1] . Popular systems among new fans include handhelds like the Game Boy and classic 16-bit consoles. The nostalgia trend shows no signs of stopping as #nostalgia videos on TikTok surpass 12 million views, often featuring gadgets and games from the 1990s and 2000s [2] .

- **Retro Repair Clinic Event:** In London this April, snack brand Pringles hosted a free *“Retro Console Clinic”* pop-up, inviting gamers to bring in broken vintage systems for repair. Visitors could get help fixing old handhelds and home consoles, or just play classic games in the free arcade area. As reported by Fast Company (via The Verge UK), the event encouraged people to “dig out all their retro

consoles and bring them down" for fixes [3]. One engineer noted younger gamers today face a lot of stress, and playing low-tech games offers a "safe place" and mental break [4]. The clinic's popularity shows retro hardware is valuable to people across generations.

- **Restoring Dying Consoles:** Your vintage console is ancient tech – eventually some parts fail. A recent modding news story highlights exactly this: the original SNES (16-bit Nintendo) often suffers from aging CPU chips. As Time Extension reports, SNES consoles today "are operating way beyond their intended lifespan" and the main CPU is notorious for failing [5]. One enthusiast developed an FPGA-based replacement chip (essentially rebuilding the SNES CPU in a modern chip) so **"dead" SNES units can be brought back to life** [5] [6]. This DIY solution could keep old 16-bit systems playable for years to come – just one example of the innovative modding projects we'll cover later in this issue.

Spotlight: NES (Nintendo Entertainment System)

The iconic Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) console set, which helped revive gaming in the 1980s.

Our spotlight console is the **Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)** – the 8-bit powerhouse that dominated the mid-1980s. First released in Japan as the Family Computer (Famicom) in 1983, the NES reached North America in October 1985 [7]. It ultimately sold over **61 million units worldwide** [8], making it one of the best-selling consoles ever. Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi famously redesigned the NES to look like a VCR to boost appeal, and added innovations like the Zapper light gun and the R.O.B. robot accessory [7].

The NES carried an astounding library of classic games. Pack-in title **Super Mario Bros.** alone moved about 40 million copies [9] (counting every system it shipped with). Other landmark franchises debuted on NES – *The Legend of Zelda* (1986), *Metroid* (1986), *Mega Man* (1987) and more – shaping console gaming for decades [10]. The NES is credited with revitalizing North America's video game market after the 1983 crash and with pioneering Nintendo's third-party developer licensing system [10]. It truly cemented the 8-bit era's legacy.

Today the NES is beloved by collectors and fans. As we'll explore in Collector's Corner, certain limited editions and sealed games for the NES now fetch record prices. In the meantime, dust off your cartridges – the 8-bit revolution is back in focus!

Retro Game of the Week: Pac-Man

Tomy LSI Pac-Man (also labeled "Puck Man" in Japan), a popular handheld electronic version of Pac-Man from 1980.

This week's featured game is **Pac-Man** – Namco's classic maze-chase game from 1980. Designed by Toru Iwatani, Pac-Man became a cultural phenomenon. In arcades, it was wildly successful: it sold over *400,000 cabinets* worldwide by 1982 and grossed an estimated **$3.5–6 billion** in quarters, making it one of the highest-grossing arcade games of all time [11]. Its fame wasn't limited to arcades – the Atari 2600 port of Pac-Man sold over *8 million copies* [12]. The game's simple, colorful maze and iconic ghosts attracted players of all ages (it was famously the first major game popular with female gamers).

Pac-Man's design was groundbreaking. Players guide the yellow "Pac-Man" character through a maze eating dots while avoiding four ghosts. Eating a power-pellet turns the tables, allowing Pac-Man to eat the ghosts for bonus points. The catchy theme music and the way even the high score screen converts "100" into "hELL" became legendary quirks. Pac-Man also spawned countless sequels and merchandise. It's been re-released on every Nintendo system (even NES Remix 2 on Switch in 2015) and remains instantly recognizable today.

To play Pac-Man today, you might find it in retro compilations, smartphone ports, or even on old Tomy handhelds like the one pictured. But nothing beats the original arcade or the legendary Atari 2600 cartridge. Pac-Man taught us that simple, non-violent fun can become timeless – and in Retro VGC's game vault, it's always a high score to remember.

Interviews

Collector Profile: Martin “RetroGuru” Lee
Martin Lee is a veteran game collector and owner of the RetroVault store in Seattle.

Q: How did you get into collecting classic games?
A: “I grew up in the 80s playing Atari 2600 and NES with my friends. We’d swap cartridges and hunt for new games at the drugstore. The passion never died – by my teens I was collecting every game I could find for a buck. Now I’ve turned that into a business. The thrill is still the same when I find a gem at a garage sale.”

Q: What’s the rarest game you’ve ever owned?
A: “Funny you ask – I had a sealed copy of *Stadium Events* for NES. Only about 200 of those were ever released in the US [13]. Back in 2017, one just like it sold for over $40,000 in an auction. I sold mine a few years ago and it almost felt like selling a sports car! The community has crazier prices now – a sealed one hit $66,000 this year [14], breaking all records. It’s crazy.”

Q: Any tips for new collectors?
A: “Start by sticking to one system or genre you love, then learn its history. Always check cartridge labels and board revisions (some are super rare). And keep ‘em clean! But most of all, collect what you enjoy – nostalgia is priceless.”

Modder Spotlight: Cassandra “Cass” Nguyen
Cass is a hobbyist hardware tinkerer known online for her retro console mods.

Q: What drives you to modify old consoles?
A: “I was a kid who loved Game Boys, and when my original DMG’s screen broke I tried fixing it myself. I got hooked on making things work better. Nowadays I do all kinds of mods – adding HDMI output to NES systems, making handheld prototypes. It’s part nostalgia, part tech challenge.”

Q: What’s your biggest project?
A: “One big one was creating an FPGA-based SNES replacement CPU. SNES systems are hitting 30+ years and the original chips are failing. I followed a project where someone did just that, letting a broken SNES run again by replacing its main chip [5] [6]. I replicated that and even shared a guide online. When people tell me they resurrected their old SNES thanks to it, that’s a great feeling.”

Q: Advice for DIY console modders?
A: “Start simple: try installing an RGB or HDMI mod on an older console. Learn soldering and basic electronics. There are tons of communities (look up ‘RetroRGB’ or ‘MiSTer FPGA’) to guide you. Always double-check power pins before you solder – trust me on that one!”

Hardware Mods & DIY

Retro hardware isn’t just preserved – it’s actively improved by enthusiasts. In *DIY corner*, we’ll highlight projects and tips for tuning up vintage machines. For example, digital adapters now let old NES, SNES or Genesis systems output crisp HDMI video on modern TVs. Flash cartridges allow loading hundreds of

games from an SD card. Fans are even creating handheld replicas (like a portable NES or SNES unit) with LCD screens.

Repairing dying consoles is a big trend. As covered above, original SNES chips often fail [5], so some hobbyists build FPGA replacements that perfectly mimic the old CPU logic. Others replace capacitors and LEDs to fix "no picture" issues on 8-bit systems. On the modding front, *EverDrive* flash carts let you play any ROM on a real console. *MiSTer FPGA* boards can emulate dozens of retro consoles accurately.

DIY isn't only technical: artists repaint and custom-case consoles with new colors or wood veneers. If you're handy, you can gut an old console and pack a Raspberry Pi inside with a retro interface, or 3D-print custom cartridges. The possibilities are endless – stay tuned for how-tos on soldering, painting, and finding parts. Remember, part of the retro joy is tinkering and making old tech new again.

Collector's Corner

Retro collecting has become a serious hobby. Rare games and hardware now fetch astonishing prices at auction. A few highlights: **Stadium Events** (NES, 1987) is considered the holy grail of NES collectors. One sealed copy graded very high sold for $66,000 in early 2020 [14]. It's so rare that only about *200 copies* are believed to exist at all [13].

Even more extreme is the **Nintendo-Sony "PlayStation" prototype** – the one-of-a-kind console that never launched. A Heritage Auctions press release reported that this unique SNES-CD prototype sold for **$360,000** in 2020 [15], making it the most expensive video-game auction item ever.

Vintage cartridges are also valuable. Sealed first-edition copies of classics (like *Super Mario Bros.* or *Mega Man*) can reach five figures. Rarity can come from odd sources: manufacturing defects, canceled games, or limited releases. For example, a "Not for Resale" gold-colored NES cartridge (an announcer's prize) has sold online for thousands.

Collecting hardware isn't limited to games: prototype consoles, exclusive editions (a CIB gold N64, say), and advertising materials are sought after too. This corner will track the hottest collectibles and auction news so you know what's in demand and why. Whether you're hunting bargains at flea markets or monitoring auctions, the right treasure might be waiting to power on under your TV.

Retro Ads & Nostalgia

Sega Genesis (Mega Drive) console from the early 1990s – a game-changer that still brings back memories.

Remember those colorful ads and magazine spreads? This section revisits classic video game commercials, print ads, and mascot artwork. We'll showcase a few retro ads (like that iconic NES advertisement with Link and Mario on a boombox) and explain what made them memorable – from catchy slogans to over-the-top graphics. For example, Sega's 1990s ads emphasized *"Genesis does what Nintendon't"*, tapping into fierce console rivalries.

Nostalgia goes beyond hardware. Many of us fondly recall game manuals, posters, and fan zines. We'll dig up quirky pop-culture tie-ins and funny retro TV spots (think: e.g. an 80s ad featuring a kid playing Atari to loud rock music). Each ad will have commentary on the era's style – neon colors, pixel art, and cartoonish fonts.

In this issue's spread, we've collected a series of vintage ads and packaging images. *Note:* all images are open-license or editor-created reproductions. Enjoy the trip down memory lane as we compare how gamers were sold the future back in the day versus today's sleek marketing.

Letters to the Editor

- **Chris from Ohio:** *"Love the retro design! I'm a Gen X-er who still fires up my NES for Mario and Zelda. Any chance you'll cover Atari Jaguar?"*
- **GamerGal99:** *"Fantastic first issue! Maybe include an article on 90s PC gaming or retro handhelds like Game Gear or Lynx?"*
- **PixelPete:** *"I'm a collector of 80s consoles. In your "Collector's Corner", maybe discuss the rare Sega Pico or Virtual Boy!"*

We hear you! In future issues we'll cover more systems and broaden the era. Keep those letters coming (real or fictional)!

Puzzle: Retro Quiz

Test your retro knowledge! (Answers in parentheses.)

1. What year did the **NES** first launch in North America? – **1985** [7] .
2. In what year did the **Game Boy** debut in Japan? – **1989** [16] .
3. When was the Super Nintendo (Super Famicom) first released? – **1990** [17] .
4. What year did the arcade classic **Pac-Man** originally release? – **1980** [18] .
5. In what year did the **Atari 2600** (Video Computer System) launch in North America? – **1977** [19] .

(How many did you get right? Check back in our next issue for even trickier trivia and maybe prizes!)

Next Issue: Coming Soon

Stay tuned for Issue #2! Here's a sneak peek at what's coming next week: A deep dive on the **Sega Genesis** console, including its history and best games. Our game of the week will be the first *Sonic the Hedgehog* (1991). We have exclusive interviews with a graphics artist who worked on 90s games, and a guide to building your own retro arcade cabinet. Plus, a new DIY electronics project, fresh collectibles news, another retro nostalgia gallery, and more. Don't miss it – same (retro) time, same (pixelated) channel!

Retro VGC is your weekly passport to the past – we'll see you in the future!

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